

ACTION WHA-00

INFO LOG-00 AID-00 AMAD-00 CIAE-00 INL-00 DODE-00 PERC-00
PDI-00 DS-00 FBIE-00 VCI-00 H-00 TEDE-00 INR-00
LAB-01 VCIE-00 NSAE-00 ISN-00 PM-00 ISNE-00 FMPC-00
SP-00 IRM-00 SSO-00 SS-00 BBG-00 IIP-00 PMB-00
DSCC-00 PRM-00 DRL-00 G-00 NFAT-00 SAS-00 SWCI-00
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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

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INFO ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

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RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 003676

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/03/2016

TAGS: PGOV, MX

SUBJECT: ELECTION DAY IN MEXICO: NOT OVER YET

REF: A. MEXICO 3662

B. MEXICO 3422

C. MEXICO 3309

Classified By: Ambassador Antonio O. Garza, Jr. for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: Election day was calm in Mexico, marked by good turnout and an orderly process. But even a good process does not always provide an immediate result with a closely divided electorate. Electoral authorities insist the country will have to wait for the July 5 official count to know the winner. That could drag on into July 6 and maybe even July 7. Late July 2, the head of Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) urged the parties to wait for IFE to do its job. President Fox delivered the same message. Within minutes, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador reacted to these pleas by declaring himself the victor, citing unnamed polls, and promising to defend his victory. Felipe Calderon responded with his own victory declaration, citing by name several polls and results which showed him with a narrow lead. Calderon paid more deference to IFE than Lopez Obrador, but his message was equally clear. Preliminary results or PREP (97.2 percent of polling stations reporting as of 12:30 pm EDT July 3) show Calderon with a one point lead. If the July 5 official count mirrors this, we expect the race to be

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challenged in the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TEPJF). End summary.

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3. (C) As in past elections, there were problems with polling stations opening late. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] There were scattered media reports of officials from all three major parties violating election laws by suborning voters with offers of goods or cash.

4. (U) Also as in past elections, there were problems with "special" polling stations running out of ballots. Because Mexico has no in-country absentee voting, its electoral laws require that voters away from home on election day be allowed to cast their ballots at designated special polling stations (often in airports, bus stations, etc.). Because eligibility for using a special polling station is defined broadly, a voter can do it even in his hometown. To limit the possibilities for fraud, the parties insist that IFE limit the total number of ballots thus available (600,000 nationwide). Special polling stations in high demand areas therefore see long waiting times for voters (several hours), and they quickly run out of ballots, angering those who arrive too late. Observers in Mexico City, Monterrey, and Oaxaca saw spontaneous demonstrations at special polling stations as a result of this problem. We do not yet have an official estimate of how many were unable to vote because of this problem.

5. (C) The last polls released before the election showed Lopez Obrador and Calderon in a statistical dead heat, and the exit poll results leaked to us during the day told the same story. When the embargo on publishing exit polls ended at 9:00 pm EDT, Mexican media outlets declined to release their results. When the time came at 12:00 am EDT for IFE to release its quick count results, its technical committee said, and IFE head Luis Carlos Ugalde reported to the nation, that the margin of error made it impossible to offer a

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prediction. The PAN and PRD immediately began agitating for the quick count results, but IFE refused to budge. Ugalde praised the voters and election officials for what he called an impeccable election day. He made clear that Mexicans should look to July 5 and the official district by district ballot count scheduled for that date.

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The PREP results (based on reporting of the tally sheets from each polling station) continue to roll in and suggest a very narrow Calderon victory, approximately one percent, fewer than 400,000 votes. The July 5 count in each of IFE's 300 districts, a formality in most elections, has suddenly acquired enormous significance, and the normally pro forma process of adding up polling station tally sheets at the district level will surely receive greater scrutiny from the parties than ever before. An IFE source told us the

July 5 process could drag on into July 6 and maybe even July 7.

6. (U) Shortly after Ugalde and then Fox spoke, Lopez Obrador addressed the cameras from his election night headquarters. He professed respect for Mexico's institutions and for IFE's eventual results, but then claimed he had won. He said he had exit polls showing he was at least 500,000 votes ahead and promised to keep the citizens informed. Recalling his promise to respect the result even if he lost by one vote, he called on the electoral institutions to respect "our results" ("nuestros resultados"). He then said that starting July 3 and in the coming days as this result was confirmed, he would begin work with the various sectors of society on a national agenda. He offered his hand to his opponents and called on them to put Mexico's interests first. From there, Lopez Obrador went to Mexico City's main plaza, the Zocalo, where repeated his claim of victory based on exit polls and regretted that IFE had not released results. He promised to defend his victory and prevent anyone from erasing the results. He said he would wait for the July 5 count and urged his supporters to remain vigilant, promising that he and his party would keep them informed. In a twist on his campaign slogan ("smile, we are going to win") he ended by saying "smile, we won."

7. (U) Shortly after Lopez Obador spoke, Calderon made a televised address. He was careful to acknowledge IFE's primacy in counting votes, but he then named several exit polls and listed their results, all showing him with a narrow lead. The PRI, represented by its president, had spoken earlier in the evening and essentially disparaged all polling and insisted that the country wait for the official results.

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Despite the PRI's pleas, it appears that the PAN won gubernatorial races in Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Morelos. As expected, the PRD won the race for Mexico City mayor. The PAN, at least so far, appears to be leading in the congressional races, cutting into the PRI's numbers, although no party will have a majority.

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